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ABSTRACT

The years when a young child's language skills are "exploding" are the years between three and five. What can make a dramatic difference in a child's life is if parents take a few minutes a day to read to him or her. Reading to a child helps him or her become a successful reader. The child develops a sense of phonics and learns that stories have a certain structure, besides learning vocabulary and memory skills and other things. This paper, one of four on literature and the young child, addresses phonics and story structure. The paper tells how a child develops a sense of phonics through rhythm and rhyme, how he or she learns that stories have a certain structure--a beginning, a middle, and an end--and that certain stories have unique patterns. An 11-item annotated bibliography (No. 1) recommends books with rhythm, rhyme and/or repetition; and another 13-item annotated bibliography (No. 2) recommends books of simple folktales, cumulative tales, and circle stories. (NKA)

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Come Back 1

Literature and the Young Child
Part One: Ages 3 - 5

by Lois W. Stern

Overview/Developing a Sense of Phonics and Story Structure

Amazing! Where did he ever learn that?
She's so smart! Do you know what she said today?

Ages 3 - 5: The years when the young child's language skills are literally exploding! **You can make a dramatic difference in your child's life by one simple act:**

- **Take a few minutes each day to read to your child.**

If you haven't been reading to your child much until now, this is the time to begin! During these precious early years, you have the opportunity to send your child an important message about books:

- **"Reading is fun!"**

Take on the voices of the characters. *Squeal* like the little pig. *Use the gruff voice* of the Ugly Old Troll. 'Ham it up' and have a wonderful time together. You shouldn't be concerned about teaching letter sounds or word recognition now. Just make reading *fun*!

Here are some of the ways the simple act of reading to your child helps him become a successful reader:

- **1) Your child develops a sense of phonics through rhythm and rhyme:**

- **2) Your child learns that stories have a certain structure: a beginning, middle and end, and that some stories have unique patterns.**

- **3) Your child's vocabulary and memory skills growas she listens to stories and talks about them.**

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- **4) Your child learns how to make predictions:**

- **5) Your child learns about places and things that he would be unlikely to experience first hand.**

- **6) Your child is helped to understand basic concepts, such as concepts of time, place and size.**

- **7) Your child finds another means of injecting humor into her life.**

- **8) Your child is helped to deal with his own emotions.**

Learning About Phonics and Story Structure

In Part One of this series, *Literature and the Young Child*,
I will address the first two topics listed above, focusing on two of the remaining topics in each of the subsequent articles.
Note: To avoid the awkward use of he/she pronouns, this author has chosen to give each gender its fair share of references in an alternating pattern.

- **1) Your child develops a sense of phonics through rhythm and rhyme:**

Mother Goose is a great ally! Try any one of the literally hundreds of Mother Goose books on the market. It isn't necessary to select a monumental work with thousands of rhymes! Just look for a book with large, inviting illustrations and an appealing selection of verses.
(I found Allen Atkinson's illustrations in Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes particularly intimate, but it is only one of many fine books from which to choose.)

After listening to a familiar rhyme, your child may be able to complete it herself. Read, *Jack and Jill went up the . . .* and then pause to give her a chance to fill in the missing word. Phonics skills will come more naturally to her if she has already established a good sense of rhythm and rhyme during these early years.

Your child will learn how to read rhyming words in first grade. But first she needs to be able to hear that some words end with the same sounds. Later on, during first grade and beyond , she'll discover that if f-u-n says fun, then s-u-n must say sun. If she has been listening to rhymes during the preschool years and is encouraged to make her own little rhymes in a playful way, she'll be all ready for success with phonics instruction later on.

See Bibliography #1 for descriptions of books filled with rhythm and rhyme and invitations for participation.

- **2) Your child learns that stories have a certain structure: a beginning, middle and end, and that some stories have unique patterns.**

When you and your child reach the last page of Margaret Wise Brown's book, *The Runaway Bunny*, and he says, *Hey, that's where the bunny started out at the beginning of the story!*, you'll know that he recognizes a circle pattern, where the events at the beginning of the story are

repeated at the end. The story has literally come 'full circle'.

When your child hears the story of *Little Red Riding Hood* and says: *That's just like in The Three Little Pigs. The wolf ended up in trouble at the end of that story, too.*, we know that she is getting a good sense of story. She is also learning all about plots, characters, story endings and making comparisons.
(See Paul Galdone's renditions of some of these classic children's folktales.)
Encourage your child to retell some of her favorites. With each retelling, the sequence of events becomes clearer as you and your child use words like: *first, later, before, after, at last, at the end* . . . .while d iscussing the story.

Many stories and songs have repetitive refrains which invite the child to join in the chant. Few children listen to the story of *The Three Little Pigs* without adding to the chorus with the words: *I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house in.*

All of these conversations and story participations are the cornerstones to helping children truly *understand* stories - the beginning stage of comprehension.

See Bibliography #2 for descriptions of folktales and other books with unique patterns.

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*** About the Author: An active educator for over twenty years, Lois W. Stern has made numerous presentations and led a variety of workshops for parents and teachers. Although themes have varied, all in some way have included the use of children's books in helping to develop literacy skills. After completing a most rewarding career in education, Ms. Stern has been dedicating herself to writing. She currently is co-editor of LI EYE, a Long Island web-zine, and founder and president of *Kidstories*. Her photo-and-fact-personalized children's book and poems can be seen at: http://www.kidstories.com/**

Bibliography #1: Books with Rhythm, Rhyme and/or Repetition
List Compiled by Lois W. Stern

****Key to age recommendations****
I: Infants T: Toddlers P: Preschoolers
EG: Early Grades (K-2) MG: Middle Grades (3-4)

Atkinson, Allen, (illustrator), Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes, Alfred A. Knopf, 1984.
Wonderfully intimate yet superbly defined illustrations accompany the more than one hundred rhymes in this charming collection. This book is a perfect blending of the familiar and lesser known nursery rhymes.

Ages: T, P, EG

Galdone, Paul (illustrator), Old Mother Hubbard and Her Dog, McGraw Hill Book Co., 1960.
This favorite nursery rhyme has the winning elements of rhythm, rhyme and nonsensical lines which encourage the listener to join in the telling of the tale. Humorous black and white drawings, highlighted by red or turquoise spot color, are sure to evoke squeals of laughter.
(See also by Galdone: The Three Little Kittens, Clarion Books, and The Owl and the Pussycat, Clarion, 1987.)

Age: P, EG

Galdone, Paul (illustrator), Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son, McGraw Hill

Book Co., 1964.
This charming tale, set to rhyme, has delighted children for generations. Alive with wit and action, these illustrations are sure to enchant the young and young at heart.

Age: P, EG

Guarino, Deborah, Is Your Mama a Llama? (Steven Kellogg, Illustrator) Scholastic, Inc. 1989.
The clever rhymes and illustrations will charm children and the adults who read to them!
"Is your mama a llama?" I asked my friend Dave.
"No she is not," is the answer Dave gave. "She hangs by her feet and she lives in a cave. I do not believe that's how llamas behave."
Lloyd is a llama who asks each animal he encounters this same question, until finally he gets the answer he's been waiting for.

Age: P, EG

Hoberman, Mary Ann (adaptor), (illustrated by Wescott, Nadine Bernard), There Once Was a Man Named Michael Finnegan, Little Brown and Company, 2001. Alfred A.

"There Once Was a Man Named Michael Finnegan,
He had whiskers on his chin-egan.
Showed them off and they grew in-egan
Poor old Michael Finnegan – begin-egan."

Mary Ann Hoberman has elaborated on this familiar song, creating a most whimsical tale. Each four line rhymed verse ending with the words "begin-egan" invites listeners to sing along. The story begins with Michael as a poor man dressed in rags. The sound of his music draws no fans. Then he adopts a

stray dog and names Quinn-egan. They join together to make a marvelous din-egan. Bold, colorful pictures carry the humor of this tale.

Ages: P, EG

Keats, Ezra Jack (illustrator), Over in the Meadow, Four Winds Press, 1971.
Charming illustrations depict the activities of animals in this familiar 1-10 counting, repetitive rhyme book. Each double page spread presents a different animal in its natural environment: crows in nests of sticks, muskrats in reeds on the shore, and some of their animal sounds. The language of this poetry is so rhythmic that you might try creating an original melody with your child and sing it as a song.

Age: T, P, EG

Lear, Edward, The Owl and the Pussycat, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1986.
This classic poem of mesmerizing verse has immortalized the honeymoon voyage of the Owl and the Pussycat.

And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,
They danced by the light of the moon,
They danced by the light of the moon.

Lorinda Cauley has managed to achieve a three dimensional effect through her captivating, full color artistry. See also another charming edition of this same poem with watercolors by Paul Galdone, which are both lovely and full of fun: Clarion Books, 1987.

Age: P, EG

Lobel, Arnold (illustrator), The Random House Book of Mother Goose, Random House, 1986.
A major collection of three hundred and six timeless nursery rhymes. Each title has been illustrated with vitality, originality and humor. A helpful index of first liners appears at the end of this book. If you are looking for a single, comprehensive collection of Mother Goose rhymes, this book would be a good choice.

Age: P, EG

Maccarone, Grace, Oink! Moo! How Do You Do, A Book of Animal Sounds, Scholastic, Inc. 1994.
Animated uncluttered pictures are a perfect accompaniment to the rhyming couplets of each page of this book. An intermediate step between a baby/toddler board book and a Pre-K-kindergarten age picture book, its easy-to-turn pages are made of firm card stock. The text is brief but, unlike board books, it does tell a simple story while introducing a variety of animal sounds.

Age: T, P

Martin, Bill, Jr., Brown, Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? Henry Holt and Co. 1967, 1990.
The rhythmic, repetitive pattern of the text and the bold animal pictures makes this book an all time favorite. Children love listening to the simple rhymes and are soon chanting them along with the reader.

Brown Bear

Brown Bear

What do you see?

I see a redbird

Looking at me.

Age: T, P, EG

Martin, Bill, Jr., Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear? Henry Holt and Co. 1991.
Rhythmic words respond to the sounds of the various animals. The format of this book mirrors the pattern of the classic, Brown, Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? described above. The first of each set of pages asks the title question with each facing page providing the answer. See also Chicka Chicka Boom Boom for a delightful alphabet story book with a jungle beat!

Age: P, EG

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Bibliography #2: Simple folktales, Cumulative Tales and Circle Stories
List Compiled by Lois W. Stern

****Key to age recommendations:****
I: Infants T: Toddlers P: Preschoolers
EG: Early Grades (K-2) MG: Middle Grades (3-4)

Brown, Margaret Wise, The Runaway Bunny, Harper & Row, 1977.
A little bunny wants to run away. As he speaks of each idea for adventure, mother bunny counters with her way of catching up with him. This is a gentle story with a circle pattern which young children seem to enjoy. One should be aware of the underlying tone of encouraged dependency in this book, and be prepared to discuss the virtues of growing up and becoming an independent person!

Age: P, EG

Emberley, Barbara, Drummer Hoff, Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1967.
This book is a folk verse about building a cannon. In this story each soldier brings a part of the equipment: powder, barrel and rammer - until they are all ready for action. General Border gives the order and Drummer Hoff fires it off. This is another example of a cumulative rhyme pattern. The vivid colors over angled woodcut lines are as eye-catching as the verse is rhythmic.

Awards: Caldecott Medal Book
Age: P, EG

Galdone, Paul (illustrator), The Three Little Kittens, Clarion, 1986. The Gingerbread Boy, The Three Bears, The Three Little Pigs, Clarion, 1984; The Little Red Hen, McGraw Hill, 1974.
A talented artist breathes new life into many of our classic children's folk tales through his marvelous visualizations just brimming with action, color and vitality. Each of these books contains its unique repetitive pattern and a clear sequence of events.

Age: P, EG

McCloskey, Robert, Make Way for Ducklings, Viking, 1941, copyright renewed, 1969. Mrs. Mallard teaches her little ducklings how to swim, dive and walk in a straight line. Then she proudly takes them for a walk across a busy Boston street, holding up traffic as she leads her brood in search of a new home. Children delight in this simple story with its happy ending. McCloskey used lithograph crayon on stone to bring out the sepia tones of his illustrations. The expressions on the faces of the feathered and non-feathered characters have made this book a time honored favorite for millions!

Awards: Caldecott Honor Book
Age: P, EG

Numeroff, Laura, If You Give a Pig a Pancake, (illustrated by Felicia Bond)
A Laura Geringer Book - Harpper Collins, 1998. If you give a pig a pancake, of course she will want some syrup to pour over it. Then she'll get sticky and need a bath. And so goes another of Ms. Numeroff's circle stories, where the main character returns to the original event at the start of the book. (See also: If You Give a Mouse a Cookie and If You Give a Moose a Muffin by the same author.
Age: P, EG

Oxenbury, Helen, The Nursery Story Book, Alfred A. Knopf, 1985.
Ten of the most popular tales for little children, including Goldilocks, Henny-

Penny, The Three Little Pigs, The Gingerbread Man. These short stories make perfect bedtime readings. The illustrations are uncluttered, colorful and charming in their simplicity. The stories offer a clear sequence of events.

Age: P, EG

Sendak, Maurice, Where the Wild Things Are, Harper, 1963, copyright renewed: 1984 and 1991.
This is the marvelously rich fantasy of a little boy's escape into the world of monsters and make believe. Even very young children seem to be able to identify with the humor in the episode of Max telling his mom: "I'll eat you up", an event which precipitated swift punishment. Sent to bed without dinner, Max used his lively imagination to create a world in a far off kingdom where he stood as king of the beasts. This book, a classic of children's literature, is an excellent example of a circle pattern story which ends as it began. The illustrations of india ink over full color tempera are just outrageous!

Awards: Caldecott Medal
Age: TP, EG

Wood, Audrey, The Napping House, Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1984.
A delightful story of cumulative rhymes, which builds vocabulary while holding a small child's attention. A sequence of characters lie down on a cozy bed where the flea bites the mouse who scares the cat in an ever expanding chain of events. The changes in lighting suggest the passage of night and emerging day.

Awards: New York Times Best Illustrated Book
Age: P, EG

Yolen, Jane, The Three Bears Rhyme Book, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich,

Ages: P, EG

Sendak, Maurice, Where the Wild Things Are, Harper, 1963, copyright renewed: 1984 and 1991.
This is the marvelously rich fantasy of a little boy's escape into the world of monsters and make believe. Even very young children seem to be able to identify with the humor in the episode of Max telling his mom: "I'll eat you up", an event which precipitated swift punishment. Sent to bed without dinner, Max used his lively imagination to create a world in a far off kingdom where he stood as king of the beasts. This book, a classic of children's literature, is an excellent example of a circle pattern story which ends as it began. The illustrations of india ink over full color tempera are just outrageous!

Awards: Caldecott Medal
Ages: P, EG

Tsutsui, Yoriko, (Illustrated by Akiko Hayashi), Anna's Secret Friend , Viking Kestrel, 1987.
Anna feels lonely when she and her family move to a new town. She misses her friends and has nothing to do while her parents are unpacking all those many boxes. Then a curious thing starts to happen. There is a quiet tip tap sound near the front door and a small bouquet of flowers left in the mailbox. It happens again and again. Who is leaving all those presents? Who can Anna's secret friend be? The illustrations in this book reflect the warm glow of friendship.

Ages: P, EG

Zion, Gene, Harry and the Dirty Dog, Harper, 1976, copyright renewed, 1984.
An aversion to baths is the theme of this book. It doesn't matter one bit that Harry is a dog; those who avoid bath time will relate to his story. Most children find the adventures and antics of this white pup with the black spots hard to resist. A charming, simple sequence of events make this a story children may enjoy retelling.

Ages: P, EG

Publishers, 1987.
Goldilocks and any number of bears are the central characters in this collection of playful rhymes. Each illustration is a joy to behold as a pure work of art. Both illustration and text pages are beautifully bordered, containing poems relating to some activity in the everyday lives of these lovable characters. You may find that even a particularly squirmy child will be able to sit still as you read.

Age: P, EG

Zion, Gene, Harry and the Dirty Dog, Harper, 1976, copyright renewed, 1984. An aversion to baths is the theme of this book. It doesn't matter one bit that Harry is a dog; those who avoid bath time will relate to his story. Most children find the adventures and antics of this white pup with the black spots hard to resist. A charming, simple sequence of events make this a story children may enjoy retelling.

Age: P, EG

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